Claims

[c1]   1.A system for generating business information for a customer, the system comprising:

(a)a geo-indexed database including information on a plurality of businesses;

(b)a logic processing unit through which each business in the database is assigned to a business category and for associating criteria to each business category; and

(c)a customer interface to the logic processing unit for allowing a customer to enter a search request to locate a business within a selected business category, the logic processing unit determining the appropriate information to be gathered from the customer and generating a list of businesses based on the business category selected by the customer.

[c2]   2.The system of claim 1, wherein the criteria associated with a business category includes a location specificity.

[c3]   3.The system of claim 2, wherein the location specificity of a business category determines a location resolution in which businesses are added to the list of businesses generated by the logic processing unit.

[c4]   4. The system of claim 1, wherein the logic processing unit determines a location of interest to the customer and generates a list of businesses ranked by their proximity to the location of interest, the location of interest determined to a resolution corresponding to the location resolution of the business category.

[c5]   5. The system of claim 1, wherein the logic processing unit determines a location of interest to the customer and generates a list of businesses ranked by their proximity to the location of interest.

[c6]   6. The system of claim 5, wherein the logic processing unit applies weighting factors to further rank the businesses in the list.

[c7]   7. The system of claim 5, wherein the criteria associated with a business category includes a location specificity and the location specificity of a business category determines a location resolution relative to the location of interest in which businesses are added to the list of businesses generated by the logic processing unit.

[c8]   8. The system of claim 1, wherein the search request is based on a business category of interest to the customer.

[c9]   9. The system of claim 1, wherein the search request is

based on a popular business name of interest to the customer and the logic processing unit associates the popular business name to a business category.

[c10] 10.A multi-modal system to provide contact between a business and a customer comprising:

(a)a geo-indexed database including data about the business;

(b)a logic processing unit, providing access into said geo-indexed database;

(c)a business interface to the system, allowing a business to control the data; and

(d)a customer interface to the system allowing the customer to search the business data to locate a business of interest,

wherein, based on a customer search, the logic processing unit generates and prioritizes a search result including a list of businesses prioritized on the basis of business location sensitivity and business score from weighting factors.

[c11] 11.The system of claim 10, wherein the logic processing unit randomizes the prioritized search results.

[c12] 12.The system of claim 10, wherein the search results are prioritized using weighting factors selected from the group consisting of relevancy, accessibility or availability

of promotions.

[c13] 13. The system of claim 10, wherein the weighting factors include ratings from previous customers.

[c14] 14. The system of claim 10, wherein the weighting factors include the businesses' status in a tiered rate structure system.

[c15] 15. The system of claim 10, wherein the database groups businesses into categories including a pre-set location sensitivity.

[c16] 16. The system of claim 10, wherein at least one of the business interface or the customer interface is based on voice and audio.

[c17] 17. The system of claim 10, wherein the multi-modal system comprises an integration of prerecorded voice segments, audio clips, and TTS components.

[c18] 18. The system of claim 10, wherein at least one of the customer interface and the business interface is a data, web or wap interface.

[c19] 19. The system of claim 10, wherein the logic processing unit allows the customer to perform personalized or location sensitive searches.

[c20]   20. The system of claim 10 further comprising an auditing and feedback function.

[c21]   21. The system of claim 10 further comprising a function whereby electronic promotions are sent to the customer.

[c22]   22. The system of claim 10, wherein the geo-indexed database includes material available to specific groups of customers.

[c23]   23. The system of claim 10 further comprising a billing function.

[c24]   24. The system of claim 23, wherein the billing function includes a tiered rate structure for the business.

[c25]   25. The system of claim 23, wherein the billing function includes a per search request fee for the customer.

[c26]   26. The system of claim 23, wherein the billing function includes a fee for the business for every instance of inclusion on a list of search results.

[c27]   27. The system of claim 10, wherein the customer is connected to the business.

[c28]   28. The system of claim 10, wherein the customer registers with the multi-modal system to provide feedback and to obtain promotions.

[c29] 29.The system of claim 10, wherein location and communication device information is obtained from the customer's communication device or from the customer.

[c30] 30.A method for generating business information for a customer, the method comprising:

(a)providing a geo-indexed database including information on a plurality of businesses and a logic processing unit through which each business in the database is assigned to a business category and for associating criteria to each business category;

(b)accepting a search request from the customer to determine a business category of interest to the customer; and

(c)operating the logic processing unit to obtain appropriate information from the customer based on the criteria associated with the business category of interest and searching the database to generate a list of businesses from the business category selected by the customer.

[c31] 31.The method of claim 30, further comprising determining a location of interest to the customer and wherein the list of businesses is generated to highlight businesses proximal to the location of interest.

[c32] 32.The method of claim 31, wherein the criteria associ-

ated with a business category includes a location specificity to determine the resolution to be used in assessing businesses proximal to the location of interest.

[c33]   33.The method of claim 32, where in the location of interest to the customer need only be to the same resolution as the resolution determined by the location specificity.

[c34]   34.The method of claim 31, wherein the list of businesses is ranked to list those businesses most proximal to the location of interest first.

[c35]   35.The method of claim 34, wherein the list of businesses is further ranked by applying weighting factors to the businesses in the list.

[c36]   36.The method of claim 30, wherein the search request is based on a business category of interest to the customer.

[c37]   37.The method of claim 30, wherein the search request is based on a popular business name of interest to the customer and the logic processing unit associates the popular business name to a business category.

[c38]   38.A method for providing business information to a customer from a business comprising:

(a)receiving a search request in a data, voice, or messaging format from a customer from a communication device, the search request specifying business information of interest and a location of interest;

(b)converting the search request to a digital signal representation understandable by a computer system;

(c)in response to the search request, assigning a location specificity to the business information of interest and searching a geo-indexed database of business information for a particular data item relating to the business information of interest;

(d)with reference to the location specificity of the business of interest, prioritizing search results based on proximity to the location of interest; and

(e)generating a list of prioritized search results into the format used for the search request.

[c39]   39.The method of claim 38, wherein the prioritized search results are randomized.

[c40]   40.The method of claim 38, wherein prioritizing the search results further includes scoring by applying weighting factors.

[c41]   41.The method of claim 38, wherein the weighting factors include ratings from previous customers.

[c42] 42. The method of claim 38, wherein the weighting factors include the businesses' status in a tiered rate structure system.

[c43] 43. The method of claim 38, wherein the search is personalized by the customer.

[c44] 44. The method of claim 38 further comprising a registration step whereby a customer registers and obtains a login name and password.

[c45] 45. The method of claim 38, wherein a registered customer provides business ratings and requests promotional material.

[c46] 46. The method of claim 38 further comprising a step of charging the customer a fee for each search request.

[c47] 47. The method of claim 38 further comprising a step of charging businesses a fee for each instance of inclusion on a list of search results.

[c48] 48. The method of claim 38 further comprising a step of obtaining location and communication device information from the customer or from the customer's communication device.

[c49] 49. The method of claim 38 further comprising a step of directly connecting a customer with a business.

[c50] 50.A method of presenting results obtained from an automated directory assistance system comprising prioritizing the results using weighting factors comprising relevancy and location, and randomizing the prioritized results.

[c51] 51.The method of claim 50, wherein the weighting factors include ratings from previous customers.

[c52] 52.The method of claim 50, wherein the weighting factors include the businesses' status in a tiered rate structure system.